

March 2020

BUILDING COMMUNITY, BUILDING A CITY SAFETY COMPLEX

The City is investing \$40 million to transform the former St. Mary's Hospital campus in North Knoxville into a new complex for the Police and Fire Departments, E911, Pension System offices and City Court operations.

To update neighbors and stakeholders about progress with the project, the City Communications Department is maintaining a Safety Complex Updates blog. Visit www.knoxvilletn.gov/safetycomplex for the latest information, photos and videos.

The new Public Safety Complex is scheduled to be finished by early 2022.

Here are some Frequently Asked Questions about the project:

Why is the Public Safety Complex necessary, and why is it being built in North Knoxville?

The first question is an easy one: The Police Department has simply outgrown the 51-year-old Safety Building at 800 Howard Baker Jr. Avenue. The building is obsolete and falling apart.

Built to accommodate 219 officers and civilian employees, KPD now numbers 500 employees.

There's water damage in the existing building that can't be repaired. Plug in a computer, and anticipate a fuse blowing. The antiquated original boiler system requires almost daily restarts, and the backup system is defunct.

Click here – <https://bit.ly/2wmDCe2> – to read a 2018 City Blog post and to see photos of the old building.

The Fire Department moved out years ago to ease the space crunch, forcing KPD and KFD to spend about \$250,000 a year to lease outside space.

Fire Chief Stan Sharp favors a move into a combined Police and Fire headquarters building.

“A combined facility with KPD will provide many efficiencies, including improving collaboration and communication with KPD staff,” Sharp said.

Answering the second question – why North Knoxville? – has everything to do with strengthening neighborhoods.

Rather than let a vacated hospital campus remain empty and deteriorate, the City chose to rejuvenate the site by razing outdated older buildings and creating opportunity for a mix of new private and public reinvestment.

What else will be on the site? Is there room for private redevelopment?

Already, Lincoln Memorial University has acquired the Magdalen Clarke Tower and is renovating it to use for its nursing, business and criminal justice schools.

The City is investing an additional \$6.5 million to clear the northern end of the former hospital campus to be marketed for private redevelopment.

Will historic bricks from the hospital be available as keepsakes?

Yes. Stay tuned for more details in the coming months, but the plan is to salvage approximately 1,000 red bricks, clean them and make them available to people who have fond memories of St. Mary’s and have inquired about the availability of the bricks.

In addition, the contractor team has collected and will restore memorials that have been placed on the hospital campus over the years.

Will there be road detours? How about dust or noise?

For the next few months, heavy equipment will be taking down the four-story building near St. Mary's Street and East Oak Hill Avenue to make way for LMU to begin construction of a new lobby and entrance for its building on the campus.

Few if any road closures are anticipated to accommodate the demolition and construction between now and 2022.

No blasting is planned, and the contractor is taking steps to limit noise and will be watering down the site as needed to cut down on dust.